THE WITCHER®



HOUSE OF GLASS

PAUL TOBIN | JOE QUERIO

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HOUSE OF GLASS

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THE WITCHER VOLUME 1: HOUSE OF GLASS
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CHAPTER ONE



THE EDGE OF THE BLACK FOREST, IN THE LAND OF THE ANGREN.

STAY STILL, YOU LITTLE BASTARD. I COULD USE A **BITE** OFF YOUR **BONES.**

HAH!

SPLOOSH

BIT TOO **QUICK** FOR YOU, EHH? NOT THE **CLEVER** SORT, METHINKS.

Y'ARE THE **TASTY** SORT, THOUGH, SO I BELIEVE **WE'LL GET ALONG** JUST--

STAY BACK OR I'LL...

RELAX. NOT GONNA HURT YOU.

DAMN!

SAW YOU FISHING. HAVEN'T SEEN **ANYONE ELSE** IN DAYS.

AHHH. **BORED** OF TALKING TO YOUR **HORSE,** EHH? WELL, YOU SURE GAVE **ME** A START.

SORRY. LIKE YOU SAID-- NO COMPANY BUT **ROACH** HERE FOR DAYS, AND **SHE'S** NOT ALL THAT DEMANDING OF COURTESIES.

SOME **FOOD,** ROOM TO **RUN,** AND THE OCCASIONAL **BOWEL MOVEMENT,** THAT'S ALL SHE REALLY NEEDS.

I'M NOT MUCH ABOVE **THAT** LIFESTYLE **MESELF,** BUT I'LL DO WHAT I CAN TO BE COMPANIONABLE.

NAME'S **JAKOB.** JAKOB ORNSTINE. I'M A **HUNTER.**

I COULD *HUNT UP* A TASTE OF *ONIONS* AND *CHEESE* FROM MY PACK, IF YOU'RE HUNGRY?

AND THERE'S THE *PERCH*, IF YOU'VE AN HOUR OR SO TO WAIT FOR THE FISH TO COOK.

SOUNDS FINE. ALL OF IT. *GOOD* TO BE OFF THE HORSE. MY *ASS* IS ABOUT HALFWAY TO *LEATHER.*

GOT PLENTY OF WINE IN RETURN. BEEN LOOKING FOR A REASON TO BREAK THIS OPEN.

EVRELUCH? FROM *TOUSSAINT?* A *RARE* TREAT. *EXPENSIVE.*

WHO WOULD'VE THOUGHT I'D RUN INTO *ROYALTY* IN THE WILDERNESS?

MY NAME'S *GERALT.* AND I'M NOT ROYALTY.

HEH. NO. I CAN SEE THAT. YOU'RE A *WITCHER,* AREN'T YOU?

WHA...?

I MEANT NO *OFFENSE! DAMMIT,* MAN!

GODS!

THUMMP

GET BACK!

WHA...?

SPLOOSH

SHIT! WHAT'S THAT?

A DROWNER!

SAW HIM EYEING YOU FROM THE WATER!

LUCKY I CAME ALONG!

YES! THAT'S IT! HOLD HIM UNDER! YOU HAVE HIM! DROWN HIM!

HE'S A DROWNER. ALREADY DROWNED ONCE. WON'T WORK AGAIN.

GOTTA DO SOMETHING ELSE.

SHUNK!

AN HOUR LATER...

...BUT BY THE TIME THE DICE STOPPED ROLLING, I'D WON A *PIG*, A *MAIDEN'S KISS*, A PAIR OF *BREECHES*, AND THE *IRE* OF A *BARE-LEGGED MAN.*

THAT'S WHEN I KNEW I HAD TO LEAVE *TOWN.*

HA HA HA!

HOW ABOUT *YOU*, JAKOB? *ALONE* OUT HERE?

ALONE? I SUPPOSE SO. *YES.*

EVER SINCE MY *MARTA* DIED.

SORRY TO HEAR THAT.

EXCELLENT WINE AND *HONEST* SORROW--*BOTH* APPRECIATED.

TRUTH BE TOLD, MARTA'S DEATH IS SOMETHING I'VE *NOT* SETTLED INTO.

THAT'S *HER.* WATCHING US FROM UP THE HILL.

MORE WINE?

YEAH, GOOD IDEA.

NINE YEARS AGO, NOW.

NINE YEARS?

NINE YEARS, AYE. SEEMS LIKE **FOREVER**, OR MAYBE NO MORE THAN A **PISS** IN THE **GRASS**, IF YOU KNOW MY MEANING.

"IT WAS **BRUXAE. VAMPIRES.** I WAS **STUPID.** LENT NO BELIEF TO FAIRY TALES. TRAVELED THROUGH A LAND WHERE I **SHOULDN'T** 'AVE SET FOOT.

"**PAID** FOR MY FOOLISHNESS, AS **FOOLS** DO.

"**BRUXAE** TOOK HER FROM ME. **TURNED** HER INTO ONE OF **THEIR** OWN."

BRUXAE? SURE ABOUT THAT?

SHE'S MY *WIFE*, GERALT. I KNOW WHO *KILLED* HER. I KNOW WHAT SHE IS.

"SHE'S *MURDEROUS* WITH OTHERS. NEVER HARMED *ME*, THOUGH. MAYBE IT'S *LOVE*, MAYBE I'M *FOOLING* MYSELF. MAYBE ONE DAY SHE'LL TEAR ME TO PIECES."

MOSTLY WE STAY APART, *WATCHING* EACH OTHER.

I KNOW SHE'S NEAR WHEN THE *SONGBIRDS* SING.

SONGBIRDS AND BRUXAE-- THEY'VE A BOND, YOU KNOW.

HEARD ABOUT THAT. COULD BE *TRUE*.

COULD BE? LISTEN TO THEM *SING*!

JUST... LISTEN.

NOW YOU KNOW MY *STORY.*

THE CONTINUING TALE OF JAKOB THE *HUNTER,* JAKOB THE FOOL, WHO STAYS NEAR *HIS WIFE,* NOT WILLING TO ADMIT SHE'S *LOST* TO HIM, BECAUSE...*HOW THE HELL CAN I?*

SHE'S *RIGHT THERE,* AFTER ALL.

I'M HAVING MORE WINE. *YOU* SHOULD, TOO.

I *WILL,* BUT I MUST FINISH MY TALE.

IT'S *COMFORTING* TO TELL IT TO A MAN. I'VE BEEN TALKING TO *STONES, CROWS,* AND MY *DEAD WIFE.*

"I'VE SPENT NINE YEARS *HUNTING* THE LAND AND *WARNING* INFREQUENT TRAVELERS *AWAY.*"

AND I'VE BEEN LISTENING TO THE *SONGBIRDS,* TRYING TO REMEMBER THEIR SOUNDS ARE *BEAUTIFUL,* NOT *HORRIBLE.*

TWO DAYS LATER.

GOOD SHOT.

COMES FROM *PRACTICE*, LIKE ANYTHING ELSE.

LET'S GET SOME *MEAT*, AND THEN BACK TO *CAMP*, EHH?

ABOUT *THAT*. THINKING IT MAY BE TIME I *RIDE ON*.

YOUR *ARSE* READY FOR THE *SADDLE* AGAIN, *EHH?* WHAT WOULD YOU SAY...

...IF I WAS TO *GO WITH YOU?*

YOU'D BE *WELCOME TO*.

BUT I THOUGHT YOU COULDN'T LEAVE *MARTA* BEHIND.

PROBABLY NOT, BUT A MAN *MUST* TRY, AND A HUNTER *MUST HUNT* FOR A *NEW LIFE* WHEN HIS OLD ONE'S *DESTROYED*. BESIDES, I'M PROBABLY TOO COWARDLY TO RIDE OFF ALONE.

MAYBE WITH *YOU*, WITCHER, MAYBE I'LL *MAKE IT*.

AFTER ALL, A *HUNTER'S* LIFE AND A *WITCHER'S*-- THEY'RE NOT SO *DIFFERENT*, *EHH?*

WE BOTH *STALK, KILL, SURVIVE*. WE MUST *KEEP MOVING*.

STAY IN *ONE* PLACE, AND WE *DIE*.

THAT'S JUST THE *WAY* OF MEN LIKE *US*.

THREE HOURS LATER...

THE BLACK FOREST, EHH, GERALT?

THOUGHT TO RIDE THROUGH IT, YES. UNLESS YOU'RE SCARED.

ONLY A FOOL WOULDN'T FEAR THESE WOODS. BEEN THAT FOOL ONCE ALREADY. SHAME YOU DIDN'T HAPPEN ALONG THEN. ALL RIGHT. LET'S GO.

WELL, DON'T *THIS* LOOK BLEAK.

COULDN'T AGREE MORE. GRAVEYARD MIGHT BE OLDER THAN THE FOREST.

STAY CLOSE. THERE'S SOMETHING HERE.

I SEE WHAT'S HERE. A GRAVEYARD.

WHY IN A MONGREL'S NAME IS THERE A GRAVEYARD HERE? THAT'S WHAT I'D LIKE TO KNOW.

GOING?

YOU HEAR SOMETHING?

I DID. A WOMAN'S VOICE, I THINK.

THAT'S NO WOMAN.

A WITCHER AND A HUNTER, BY MY NEST, I DECLARE!

HEE HEE. HANDSOME MEN. GOING, ARE YOU? GOING TO THE HOUSE?

WHAT HOUSE? WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

DON'T TALK TO HER. SHE'S A GRAVE HAG. WATCH OUT FOR HER TONGUE.

HER TONGUE?

HEE HEE! HER TONGUE! WATCH OUT FOR HER TONGUE. WATCH WHAT YOU SAY. WATCH OUT FOR THE HOUSE. WATCH OUT FOR THE SONGBIRDS. WATCH YOUR MANNERS.

HEE HEE.

WATCH YOUR STEP, FOR YOU STEP ON THE DEAD.

HEE HEE. TASTY DEAD.

TASTY DEAD.

SHE *GONE* YET? CAN I *CLEAN OUT* MY *TROUSERS?* WHAT IN THE *HELL* WAS SHE *CACKLING* ABOUT?

NO IDEA, AND I'D SAY THIS IS ONE OF THOSE TIMES WHEN IT'S BETTER TO BE BLISSFULLY *IGNORANT.*

RATHER TALK ABOUT *DEMONIC HAGS* AND THEIR *WITHERED LEATHER BREASTS,* OR DO YOU WANT SOME *WINE?*

I'LL TAKE THE *WINE,* AND I'LL THANK YOU NOT TO MENTION THE *OTHER* TOPIC WHILE I'M *DRINKING,* WITCHER.

AHH, TASTY, *TASTY* WINE.

SO THEY SAID..."WE CAN LET YOU OUT OF ***PRISON,*** WITCHER, BUT YOU'VE GOT TO ***KILL*** THE ***BLOOD-THIRSTY GIANT*** OR ***MARRY*** THAT MAIDEN YOU'VE BEEN ***FONDLING.***"

AND ***YOU*** SAID...?

I SAID... "HOW ***BIG'S*** THE ***GIANT?***"

HEH HEH. "HOW ***BIG'S*** THE ***GIANT,***" HE SAYS.

SHOULDN'T IT BE GETTING *DARK?*

IT *SHOULD.* BUT IT'S *NOT.*

I'M BEGINNING TO THINK WE SHOULDN'T BE IN THESE WOODS.

ALL VERY FINE TO SAY *NOW,* GERALT.

GO *BACK* IF YOU WANT, JAKOB. *MARTA* PROBABLY MISSES YOU.

"NO, GERALT. I'LL NOT GO. I'M MORE CONCERNED ABOUT BEING FOREVER BOUND TO MARTA THAN I AM ABOUT THIS FOREST. WHICH PROBABLY MAKES ME EVEN MORE THE FOOL."

THOUGH I'M **NOT** SUCH A FOOL THAT I HAVEN'T NOTICED THE STRANGE **MARKINGS**, THE **TWIGS** AND **BONES** HANGING FROM THE TREES, OR HOW YOU'VE BEEN **ITCHING** TO DRAW YOUR **SWORD.**

ANYTHING YOU'D LIKE TO **SHARE,** WITCHER?

MORE LIKE SOMETHING I'D WANT TO **AVOID** SHARING. TOO LATE FOR THAT, THOUGH.

I THINK WE'RE IN A **MAZE.**

A **MAZE?** NONSENSE. IT'S JUST A **FOREST.**

NOTHING IS EVER **JUST** A FOREST. EVERY FOREST IS **ALIVE.** THEY HAVE THEIR OWN **THOUGHTS,** AND **TRICKS.**

THERE ARE **ANCIENT** THINGS HERE, **TWISTING** THE PATH. **TWISTING** OUR SENSE OF DIRECTION.

WE'VE RIDDEN PAST HERE BEFORE.

"**ANCIENT** THINGS"? WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY **ANCIENT THINGS?**

THAT.

GODS! WHAT *IS* THAT THING? IT SEEMS A PART OF THE *FOREST!*

IT'S A *LESHEN.* MAYBE WE WERE *BOTH* FOOLS TO RIDE INTO THESE WOODS. I CAN CALM OUR HORSES WITH THE AXII SIGN. OUR NERVES ARE ON THEIR OWN, THOUGH.

CAN WE *RUN?*

WE COULD TRY, BUT IT'D BE *USELESS.*

I HATE TO BE AN *ARSE,* BUT I DON'T LIKE YOUR *ATTITUDE.*

ME NEITHER. BUT RUNNING'D BE A WASTE OF TIME AND ENERGY.

WE'RE CAUGHT IN A *MAZE.* LESHENS ARE *TERRITORIAL.* THIS ONE'S *CONFUSING* THE TRAILS. AND *ANYWHERE* WE RUN...

...WE'LL END UP BACK HERE? WELL, THAT'S A MIGHTY *BLAST* OF *SHIT,* THAT IS.

SO, IF WE CAN'T *RUN...?*

WE GOTTA *FIGHT.*

STAY BACK. I'LL *MOVE* BETTER IF...

?

WAIT, GERALT. SONGBIRDS.

HUH?

MY MEDALLION'S VIBRATING. THESE BIRDS...THEY'RE MAGIC.

FOLLOW THEM!

"FOLLOW THEM, GERALT? YOU THINK THEY MIGHT BE FROM...?"

"I THINK THEY'RE LEADING US OUT OF THE MAZE, JAKOB. YOUR WIFE MAY LOVE YOU AFTER ALL."

"OF COURSE SHE DOES. BUT WHERE ARE THE BIRDS LEADING US?"

HERE.

MARTA?

CREEEK

CHAPTER TWO



LOOKS LIKE A *TRAP* TO ME.

I SEE AN *OPEN DOOR.*

OFTEN THE SAME THING.

I THINK WE SHOULD GO IN.

YOUR WIFE'S GONE. SHE WAS ON THE BALCONY.

MAYBE MARTA AWAITS INSIDE. LET'S GO.

DON'T LIKE THE WAY THE DOOR OPENED.

IF IT IS A TRAP, WE'D BE FOOLS TO GO IN *THAT* WAY.

AND IF THE DOOR OPENED BECAUSE WE'RE *TRULY* WELCOME, WE'LL BE *JUST* AS WELCOME IF WE GO IN THROUGH THE *BALCONY.*

SO THAT'S WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE A *WITCHER,* EHH? ALWAYS *CRAWLING* UP THE *SIDES* OF *BUILDINGS?*

NOT ALWAYS, NO.

I GO THROUGH *WINDOWS* SOMETIMES.

HUH. WITCHERS.

HMM. MORE SONGBIRDS.

SINGING ALONG WITH MY *MEDALLION.* HEAR IT *HUMMING?*

JUST NOW IT'S SINGING ABOUT *CURSES.*

AND *MAGIC.*

BUT MOSTLY ABOUT *CURSES.*

JAKOB?

MARTA?

STILL HUMMING, HUH?

GERALT?

DAMMIT, MAN, WHERE ARE YOU?

HERE.

AHHH!

SHITE, WITCHER. ALMOST BEWITCHED MY BREECHES. DON'T MOVE SO SILENT.

SORRY. I WASN'T TRYING TO SNEAK UP ON YOU.

IF THAT WEREN'T SNEAKING... MUST I PUT A BELL ON YOU?

NO. NOR ANYONE ELSE.

YOU SEEN MARTA?

JUST HAVE TO KEEP LOOKING.

I'M SURE SHE CAN'T BE FAR, THOUGH THIS DAMN HOUSE SEEMS TO EXTEND ALL THE WAY TO--

WAIT. MY MEDALLION'S...

KRASH!

GUHHH!

STAND BACK!

JUST STAND BACK? NO PROBLEM, WITCHER.

I'LL EVEN RUN IF YOU WANT ME TO!

GODS, THE STENCH! WHAT IS THAT THING?

AARD!

AN AARD? LOOKS MORE LIKE A CORPSE!

IT'S A GHOUL OF SOME SORT! A CURSED CREATURE.

WHY'D YOU CALL IT AN AARD?

AARD!

WHAMMPFF

AARD IS A SIGN. A BOLT OF FORCE.

ONE OF YOUR WITCHER TRICKS?

YEAH.

A TRICK THAT TAKES YEARS OF STUDY AND PRACTICE.

OWW. DAMMIT, GERALT.

DO SOME TRICKS.

UNHH!

WMPFF

IGNI.

GAHK

GAHH?

FIRE, TOO?

YEAH. ANOTHER TRICK.

HUH?

IT'S STILL ALIVE?!

NO. DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS, BUT...IT'S NOT ALIVE.

IT'S IGNORING US. DOESN'T SEEM DANGEROUS ANYMORE.

I SET ITS FACE ON FIRE AND STABBED IT THROUGH THE HEART--MOST THINGS WOULDN'T.

WHERE'S IT GOING?

SEEMS LIKE IT'S BEING DRAWN SOMEWHERE. TO THAT ROOM.

MY SAD GUESS? NO TAVERN OR BROTHEL BEHIND THAT DOOR.

GODS. WHAT IS THIS?

NEITHER *BROTHEL* NOR *TAVERN*, JAKOB.

YOU WERE RIGHT ABOUT *THAT.*

DEAD *SOLDIERS.* DEAD *HUNTERS.* DEAD *WOMEN.* *MERCHANTS.* *MONSTERS.* ALL *DEAD.* BUT NOT *DECAYING.*

LOOKS LIKE SOME HAVE BEEN HERE FOR *CENTURIES.*

WHAT'S THAT *MEDALLION* OF YOURS SAY?

SAYS THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO HERE.

AND IT SAYS TO CLOSE THE DOOR *TIGHT.*

TALKATIVE BIT OF METAL, THAT MEDALLION OF YOURS.

YEAH, WELL...I'M INTERPRETING.

TWO HOURS LATER...

HMMM. SMELL THAT HAM, GERALT! AND THE GRAVY! YOU CLAIM THE HOUSE IS CURSED, BUT THE MAGIC SEEMS KINDLY ENOUGH.

DON'T FORGET THE MONSTERS WE'VE SEEN.

OH, I HAVEN'T. BUT AT LEAST FOR NOW WE'VE CHANCED UPON A WARMING FIRE AND A FATTENING MEAL.

IT'S EITHER MAGIC OR A WOMAN'S BEEN ABOUT. MARTA, I'D THINK. TAKING CARE OF ME, EVEN NOW.

HOW ABOUT YOU, GERALT? YOU HAVE A WIFE? IS THAT SOMETHING WITCHERS DO?

AND WHILE I'M ASKING, IS PASSING THE WINE SOMETHING WITCHERS DO?

IT IS. THOUGH WE'RE MORE PRACTICED AT DRINKING IT.

AS FOR WOMEN, MOST WITCHERS AREN'T SWAYED BY EMOTIONS. WE DON'T NEED COMPANIONSHIP. THE TRANSFORMATION STRIPS THAT AWAY.

YOU SAID MOST? WHY... MOST?

GUESS I'M DIFFERENT. MY TRANSFORMATION WASN'T ENTIRELY NORMAL.

WELL NOW, NOTHING ABOUT A WITCHER IS ENTIRELY NORMAL, THOUGH, IS IT?

SO THEN, WOMEN IN YOUR LIFE? ANYBODY TO COOK A HEN FOR YOU?

NOT WOMEN LIKE THAT, NO.

SAD. MARTA WAS A GRAND COOK. STEWS, MOSTLY. ROASTED POTATOES. BOAR.

SHE LIKED TO PUT FLOWERS ON THE EDGES OF THE PLATE. MAKE THE MEAL PRETTY, SHE'D TELL ME.

STUPID, THAT, WOULDN'T YOU SAY?

WOULDN'T BE SO QUICK TO JUDGE.

NOT ONE FOR *WOMEN*, THEN? NO REAL *LOVE* IN YOUR LIFE? JUST WOMEN IN *PASSING* AND FOR *COIN*?

I'M A *WITCHER*. THAT'S THE LIFE WE LEAD.

BEING A *WITCHER* HAS NAUGHT TO DO WITH IT. YOU'RE *AFRAID* OF HAVING YOUR *HEART BROKEN*.

PROBABLY.

WELL, IT'S A *VALID* FEAR.

TWO HOURS LATER...

OFF TO *LOOK* FOR HER?

OH, YOU'RE *AWAKE.* THOUGHT YOU WERE *ASLEEP.*

AND...*YES.* I'VE DECIDED TO FIND MARTA. IT'S SOMETHING I'VE GOT TO DO ALONE.

AIM TO *STOP* ME?

CAN'T DECIDE IF I SHOULD. I'LL *THINK* ABOUT IT.

YOU'LL PROBABLY BE *GONE* BEFORE I MAKE UP MY MIND.

AND I'LL PROBABLY BE ASLEEP.

SMACK

HAH!

OWWW, NOT SO ROUGH!

HUH?

A SUCCUBUS.

AND A WITCHER, IT SEEMS.

ONE OF US IS NAMED VARA. WHAT'S THE OTHER ONE NAMED?

GERALT.

WELL, GERALT, I'M BORED AND YOU LOOK AMUSING. SORRY IF I FRIGHTENED YOU.

FRIGHTENED ME? NO. AM I AMUSING? MAYBE. BUT WHY ARE YOU BORED?

YOU'LL BE BORED TOO, SOON ENOUGH. WE'RE TRAPPED IN THIS CURSED HOUSE.

"TRAPPED"?

OF COURSE. THE FOREST IS TOO FULL OF ***LESHENS*** TO RISK ANY ATTEMPT TO LEAVE.

"NASTY BRUTES. IT'S ***IMPOSSIBLE*** TO PREDICT WHERE YOU'LL SEE THEM NEXT AS THEY APPEAR AND DISAPPEAR IN SWARMS OF CROWS. AND THEIR WOLVES ARE JUST ***MEAN.*** THEY'LL ***CHEW*** ON YOU FOR NO REASON. NONE AT ALL.

"THEN THERE'S THE ***GRAVE HAG.***"

HAVE YOU ***SEEN*** HER? SHE'S ***NOT*** BEAUTIFUL.

YOU CAN COMPLIMENT ***ME,*** NOW.

IS THAT ALL? HARDLY ***OVERWHELMING*** AS A COMPLIMENT, GERALT. BUT I SUPPOSE I HAVE HEARD WITCHERS CAN BE ***COLD.***

MAYBE THAT ***OTHER*** MAN YOU'RE WITH IS MORE AMUSING? WHAT DID YOU CALL YOUR FRIEND? ***JAKOB?***

WELL, YOU'RE ***CERTAINLY*** BETTER LOOKING THAN A ***GRAVE HAG.***

WALK WITH ME WHILE YOU ANSWER. YOU SEEM TENSE. DO I MAKE YOU NERVOUS?

YOU MAKE MY MEDALLION NERVOUS, AND I TRUST IT.

AND, YES. THE OTHER MAN'S NAME IS JAKOB.

WE'RE HERE BECAUSE OF MARTA, HIS WIFE. THE BRUXA. HAVE YOU SEEN HER?

I HAVE. BUT WE'VE NOT SHARED WINE, CONVERSATION, NOR A BED.

DID YOU SAY SHE WAS A BRUXA?

THAT'S WHAT JAKOB SAYS.

HMM. SETTLED, THEN. A MAN SHOULD KNOW HIS WIFE.

ANYWAY, SO NICE TO HAVE WARM BODIES IN THE HOUSE AGAIN.

BEEN HERE LONG?

DOES IT MATTER?

LONG ENOUGH TO GROW BORED.

THE HOUSE SEEMS ENDLESS.

THAT WAS FUN ENOUGH, AT FIRST. I DO LOVE EXPLORING.

I DO LOVE FINDING THINGS.

TOUCHING THEM.

HMM. YES. VERY NICE, GERALT.

I COULD USE A LITTLE HUMAN WEAKNESS IN MY TEETH.

GOT A PROBLEM, THEN.

I DON'T HAVE MUCH WEAKNESS, AND MY HUMANITY'S DEBATABLE.

HMMM. ANOTHER BANQUET HALL.

YES. THERE ARE FIVE.

OR THAT'S HOW MANY I'VE CHANCED ACROSS THUS FAR.

AND, LIKE JAKOB AND I FOUND EARLIER, THIS FOOD SEEMS TO HAVE JUST BEEN SERVED.

THING IS, WHERE ARE THE COOKS? WHERE ARE THE SERVANTS? WHO MAKES THESE MEALS?

IT'S ALL MAGIC, AS FAR AS I KNOW.

WELL, SO FAR MAGIC'S BEEN A GOOD COOK.

DON'T YOU FEAR IT MIGHT BE POISONED? OR, WAIT...NO.

WITCHERS ARE IMMUNE TO POISON, AREN'T YOU? SOMETHING ABOUT YOUR MUTATIONS?

TRUE ENOUGH. FEW POISONS CAN HARM US.

THAT'S USEFUL. HOW ABOUT WINE?

WHAT ABOUT IT?

CAN IT GET YOU DRUNK? DRUNKENNESS DOESN'T COUNT AS BEING POISONED, DOES IT?

WINE AFFECTS WITCHERS SAME AS ANYONE ELSE. DOES TAKE A BIT MORE, THOUGH.

OH? THEN WE'D BEST GET STARTED.

AND I TOLD THE TROLL... "A GOLD PIECE TO CROSS YOUR DAMN BRIDGE? FOR THAT PRICE I'LL TAKE OFF MY BOOTS AND WADE THROUGH THE RIVER!"

AND WHAT DID THE TROLL SAY?

"TWO SILVER-- I CARRY BOOTS!"

HA HA HA!

GERALT, I LIKE YOU. I'VE A GIFT FOR YOU. A KEY. TO MY ROOM. ON THE FOURTH FLOOR.

HMM, ONLY THREE FLOORS HERE.

THAT DEPENDS ON WHICH DOORS YOU OPEN.

INCIDENTALLY, YOU WON'T NEED THE KEY. I NEVER LOCK MY DOOR.

WHY GIVE ME THE KEY, THEN?

TO REMIND YOU THAT YOU'RE WELCOME.

GUESS YOU REALLY *ARE* BORED.

TELL ME, VARA, HOW'D YOU END UP IN THIS HOUSE?

SIMPLE ENOUGH. I WAS TRAVELING FROM VENGERBERG TO RIEDBRUNE.

"THE TRIP WAS TOO *LONG*, TOO *BORING*. NOT ENTIRELY *SAFE*, EVEN FOR *MY* KIND. I DISGUISED WHO I AM, AND *WHAT* I AM, AND I TOOK COMFORT IN *NUMBERS*.

"IN FACT, I TOOK *EVERY* POSSIBLE COMFORT.

"BUT IT TURNED OUT I'D ATTACHED MYSELF TO THE *WRONG* CARAVAN. THEY WERE MORE *THIEVES* THAN *MERCHANTS*. THEY RODE HERE INTO *CAED DHU*, THE *BLACK FOREST*, TO ESCAPE A FAIR NUMBER OF *UNDERSTANDABLY* ANGRY SOLDIERS."

AND WE ALL ENDED UP HERE.

ALL OF YOU? SO WHERE *ARE* THESE MEN?

COME. I'LL *SHOW* YOU.

A TRAPDOOR? MISSED THAT EARLIER.

NOT SURPRISING. IT WAS WEEKS BEFORE I FOUND IT--BEFORE WE FOUND IT.

AND WE CAME DOWN HERE.

CURSED.

CHAPTER THREE



CURSED.
CURSED.
CURSED.
CURSED.
VARA?
VARA! WHERE THE HELL'D YOU GO?
CURSED.
CURSED.
CURSED.
CURSED.
BOOM
AARD!
CRNCH

CURSED.

CURSED.

IGNI.

FWOOSH

UNHH!

AGH!

CURSED.

CURSED.

AARD YOU BASTARDS!

WHU WUMPF

=HUFF= =HUFF=

SHIT!

FWSS

FWOOSH

CREEEK

UGH! GET YOUR MOLDY CLAWS OFF ME!

CURSED.

AARD!

FWOOSH

SLAM

GERALT!

GODS, MAN! LOOK AT YOU! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

I'LL LIVE. RAN INTO SOME TROUBLE.

AND THE FIGHT'S NOT OVER.

GERALT?

YOU TRIED TO KILL ME, FEED ME TO THOSE CREATURES IN THE CELLAR.

NO! I DIDN'T KNOW THEY'D CHANGED INTO...

I MEAN... I SAW WHAT THEY'D BECOME AND I PANICKED AND RAN! I THOUGHT YOU WERE WITH ME!

GERALT, PLEASE! I DIDN'T KNOW THOSE MEN WERE...WHATEVER THEY ARE!

GERALT! CALM DOWN!

I MERELY WANTED TO SHOW YOU THE CELLAR! I HAD NO IDEA THAT WOULD HAPPEN!

SENT ME DOWN THOSE STAIRS AND LEFT ME TO DIE-- THAT'S WHAT YOU DID.

GERALT! HOLD, MAN! THIS WOMAN SOUGHT ME OUT! BEGGED FOR HELP! WE CAME RUNNING TO SAVE YOU!

WOULD SHE DO THAT IF SHE WANTED YOU DEAD?

THOSE MEN WERE ALIVE LAST I KNEW.

I DIDN'T KNOW THEY'D BECOME MONSTERS. I COULDN'T HAVE KNOWN THEY WOULD ATTACK.

THEY WERE "ALIVE"? HOW LONG AGO WAS THAT?

A WEEK? TWO? MAYBE MORE.

TIME MOVES STRANGELY IN THIS HOUSE.

SORRY. IT'S JUST THAT I THOUGHT--

NO! YOU WEREN'T *THINKING AT ALL!* YOU CAN'T TREAT A *WOMAN* THAT WAY!

WOMEN ARE *DIVINE* CREATURES, WITCHER! THEY COMMAND OUR *RESPECT!*

NO MAN CAN UNDERSTAND A WOMAN, NOT *EVER!* THEIR REASONS ARE TOO *MYSTERIOUS!* TOO *CHAOTIC!*

WE MUST *ACCEPT* THEM FOR WHAT THEY ARE. AND ACCEPT THAT THEIR *LIVES* ARE FAR TOO *SHORT.*

THEY CAN BE *TAKEN* FROM US AT ANY TIME, SO YOU CAN'T JUST *DRAW* YOUR *DAMNED SWORD* AND *WAVE IT ABOUT* LIKE YOU'RE SOME SORT OF... OF...

AHH, I'M *SORRY,* WITCHER. IT'S THIS *HOUSE.* IT'S...THIS *CREATURE* THAT ONCE WAS *MARTA.*

I'M FAR TOO *TENSE.* FEEL LIKE I'M *BOILING.*

I *UNDERSTAND,* JAKOB. I FEEL IT TOO.

MY *MEDALLION'S* BEEN *HUMMING*-- WHOLE TIME WE'VE BEEN IN THIS HOUSE.

THERE'S A *POWERFUL* CURSE HERE.

GOOD THING THERE'S A POWERFUL *LATCH,* TOO.

MARTA WAS YOUR *WIFE,* THEN?

YES. GERALT *TOLD* YOU? HAVE YOU *SEEN* HER IN THIS HOUSE? DO YOU *KNOW* HER?

NO. NOT REALLY. SHE KEEPS TO HERSELF.

I SEE. AND, *YES*, MARTA WAS MY *WIFE*. I...SHE WAS...THE SHELLS REMIND ME OF HER.

HOW SO?

"SHE LOVED TO THINK OF THEIR STORIES, OF THEIR LIVES IN THE SEA.

"FASHIONED ME *NECKLACES* OF THE *PRETTIEST* ONES. EVEN TALKED TO A BLACKSMITH ABOUT INLAYING HER BEAUTIFUL SHELLS INTO THE HANDLE OF MY DAGGER, AS A GIFT FOR ME.

"BUT ONE DAY, WHEN MARTA WAS COLLECTING SHELLS, SOMETHING ROSE FROM THE SEA.

"A HORRIBLE MONSTER TRIED TO DRAG HER INTO THE WATERS.

"LUCKILY, I CHANCED UPON THE SCENE BEFORE SHE WAS ***STOLEN*** UNDER THE WAVES. I WAS ABLE TO PULL HER BACK TO ME.

"STILL, SHE WORE THE MARKS OF THE ***FOUL*** CREATURE FOR WEEKS. THOSE ***STAINS*** SHOWED HOW ***CLOSE*** IT HAD BEEN."

AFTER THAT, ALL I COULD THINK OF WAS THE ***MONSTERS*** OF THIS WORLD. HOW ***DAMNED*** MANY CREATURES LURK ***UNKNOWN*** IN THIS WORLD. HOW MARTA WAS NEVER SAFE.

SHE WAS NEVER SAFE.

WHEN DID THE TWO OF YOU *MEET?* HOW LONG HAVE YOU *KNOWN* HER?

SINCE SHE WAS *TEN.*

"SHE SOLD PASTRIES--AND I'D FOLLOW HER AROUND. HER MOTHER HAD A SHOP--COOKING UTENSILS, HERBS, BUT MOSTLY BAKED GOODS. MARTA WOULD STROLL THROUGH THE VILLAGE, SELLING PASTRIES. SHE'D SING, TOO. LIKE A SONGBIRD, SHE WAS.

"AT FIRST I FOLLOWED HER BECAUSE I WANTED THOSE PASTRIES, BUT, AS HER CHEST FILLED OUT, I, WELL..."

I THINK WE UNDERSTAND. *ANOTHER* KIND OF TREAT.

YES, WELL... MARTA WAS...

I CAN'T JUST *STAND* HERE. I MUST *FIND* HER.

YOU TWO STAY HERE. I'M AFRAID SHE'LL NOT APPROACH WITH OTHERS AROUND.

GOING OFF *ALONE?* IN *THIS* HOUSE? IT'S NOT *SAFE.*

OF *COURSE* IT'S NOT SAFE. BUT THEN...LOVE *NEVER* IS.

I'LL NOT *CLOSE* MY HEART LIKE A *COWARD,* *THOUGH.*

HAH! YOU HAD NOTHING TO SAY TO *THAT, DID YOU,* WITCHER?

AMUSING. VERY AMUSING.

I'M NOT *BORED* ANYMORE.

COME. I'VE SOMETHING TO **SHOW** YOU.

AGAIN? I NEARLY DIED LAST TIME YOU SAID THAT.

ALL PART OF **LIFE'S** RICH EXPERIENCES, WITCHER. WOULD YOU REALLY PREFER DEATH BY BOREDOM TO **ADVENTURE?**

BUT ALL I WISH TO SHOW YOU THIS TIME IS **GLASS.**

"GLASS"?

YES. YOU MUST HAVE NOTICED ALL THE **STAINED GLASS WINDOWS.** I THINK **THIS** IS WHERE THEY'RE MADE.

A **WORKSHOP?** WHO **WORKS** HERE?

NO ONE THAT I'VE EVER SEEN. THE GLASS JUST CHANGES. THE WINDOWS IN THE HOUSE DIFFER FROM DAY TO DAY.

I'VE SEEN MARTA **NEAR** THIS ROOM, A FEW TIMES. PERHAPS **SHE'S** OUR MYSTERIOUS GLASSWORKER.

TELL ME SOMETHING. DO YOU THINK JAKOB **TRULY** LOVES HER? DO YOU THINK **MARTA** LOVES **HIM?**

I'M A **WITCHER. LOVE'S NOT** SOMETHING I COULD CLAIM TO UNDERSTAND.

SUCH *LIES*, GERALT!

PLEASE DON'T PRETEND *LOVE* IS BUT ANOTHER *MONSTER* YOU CAN *VANQUISH.*

AND IF IT WERE? WHICH *SWORD* WOULD YOU USE IN THE FIGHT? *SILVER?* OR *STEEL?*

OR WOULD YOU UNSHEATHE SOMETHING ELSE ENTIRELY?

LOOK, THE *SONGBIRDS* HAVE RETURNED. SUCH *SWEET* SONGS. I WONDER WHAT THEY *MEAN?*

I'D VENTURE THEY'RE ASKING, "HAS THE *WITCHER* EVER HUNTED FOR *LOVE?*"

WELL... *HAVE* YOU?

NEXT *QUESTION.*

THE *BIRDS*, NOT I, *WISH TO KNOW*, GERALT. ANSWER THEM!

MY, WHAT A SCOWL. *PITY.* HERE I THOUGHT YOU STRONG ENOUGH TO ENDURE A FEW TAUNTS.

LOVE... JUST NO ROOM FOR IT IN A *WITCHER'S* LIFE.

I DO *MEAN* WELL.

MOST PEOPLE *DO.* NEVER SEEMS TO MATTER MUCH, IN THE END.

WANT TO GO *OUTSIDE?*

I'D *LIKE* THAT. BUT WE SHOULDN'T STRAY *TOO* FAR.

NOT SURE WHICH IS MORE DANGEROUS— THE *HOUSE* OR THE *FOREST.* WHAT I *DO* KNOW IS THAT THE FOREST IS LESS *FORGIVING.*

TAKE MY HAND, IF THAT'S NOT TOO MUCH TO ASK.

I PROMISE ***NOT*** TO FALL IN ***LOVE.*** I KNOW THAT'S TOO ***FRIGHTENING.***

NOTHING'S MORE FRIGHTENING THAN A ***WOMAN BORED.***

SUCH A ***ROMANTIC.*** YOU ALWAYS KNOW THE WRONG THING TO SAY.

THE SONGBIRDS-- THEY'RE TRYING TO LEAD US ***AWAY,*** BACK TO THE ***HOUSE.*** HAVE YOU NOTICED?

YES. AND MY MEDALLION AGREES.

YOU'D THINK WE'D BE WISE ENOUGH TO HEED THE WARNINGS, WOULDN'T YOU?

I'D THINK SO, YES.

STILL, WE KEEP WALKING. IT'S CURIOUS.

TELL ME, GERALT. JAKOB SAYS HE'S KNOWN MARTA SINCE SHE WAS TEN? HE EVENTUALLY MARRIED HER?

THEN, AT SOME POINT SHE WAS KILLED BY BRUXAE, AND BECAME ONE HERSELF?

THAT'S THE STORY I HEARD.

"BRUXAE ARE NOT BORN IN THIS MANNER. YET YOUR FRIEND TELLS THIS IMPOSSIBLE STORY TO A WITCHER?"

CURIOUS, I KNOW. IT'S THE ONE REASON I DECIDED TO COME ALONG AND THEN ENTER THE HOUSE.

BECAUSE OCCASIONALLY I REMEMBER WHAT CURIOSITY DID TO THE CAT.

THEN WHY ARE YOU TRYING TO LEAVE NOW?

SO DO I, BUT I SUPPOSE CURIOSITY'S SOMETHING YOU CAN INDULGE WHEN YOU HAVE LIVES TO SPARE.

HEE HEE. PRETTY BIRDS.

I NEVER THOUGHT I'D SAY *THIS* TO A *MAN,* BUT I THINK WE'VE *GONE TOO FAR.*

YOUR SENSE OF *HUMOR* DOES YOU *CREDIT.* MOST PEOPLE WOULDN'T THINK TO *JOKE* IN A FOREST AS DANGEROUS AS THIS.

MOST PEOPLE WOULDN'T CALL A *SUCCUBUS* A "*PERSON,*" EITHER.

I *DO* THINK WE SHOULD MAKE OUR WAY BACK TO--

CAW!

AHHH!

WOOOOOOOO

AWOOOOOOOOOO

DAMN! YOU WERE RIGHT, VARA. WE HAVE GONE TOO FAR. BACK TO THE HOUSE, NOW!

IGNI!

FWOOSH

HSSSs

THWUMP

GUHHH!

GERALT!

THWOKK

UNFFF!

SHIT.

GERALT! ARE YOU...?

WE HAVE TO *LEAVE* THIS PLACE! *NOW!* LESHENS DRAW THEIR POWER FROM THESE *TOTEMS!*

THERE ARE SO MANY!

RUN!

GRRRRRRR

AARD!

FWOOSH

HSSSSS

DAMN!

DAMNED BIRDS! BURN!

FWOOSH

SONGBIRDS, NOW? HAVE WE REACHED THE EDGE OF THE LESHEN'S TERRITORY? ARE WE SAFE?

YEAH, I THINK SO.

SECOND FIGHT WHERE YOU'VE DONE NOTHING, VARA.

AS A SUCCUBUS, YOU'RE A CREATURE OF SOME POWER. WHY DIDN'T YOU HELP ME?

WHO SAYS I DIDN'T?

I GAVE YOU SOMETHING TO LIVE FOR.

BONG BONG BONG

HUH?

BELLS.

BONG BONG BONG

SOUNDS LIKE THEY'RE COMING FROM THE *HOUSE.*

BONG BONG BONG

GERALT? THE SONGBIRDS ARE *DYING.*

BONG BONG BONG BO

CHAPTER FOUR

BONG
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NO IDEA.
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BONG
HURRY! BACK TO THE HOUSE!
WHAT ARE THOSE BELLS? WHY ARE THE SONGBIRDS DYING?
THE BELLS-- THEY'VE STOPPED. WHY?
MAYBE THEY'VE DONE THEIR JOB-- SUMMONED US BACK.
I HOPE YOU'RE WRONG, GERALT. THAT'S JUST... CREEPY.

JAKOB? MARTA?

GERALT. NO SUDDEN *MOVES*, PLEASE.

WHAT'S *GOING ON?* WHAT WERE THOSE *BELLS ABOUT?*

BELLS? NOT SURE. I DIDN'T HEAR 'EM.

FOUND THIS TABLE. THE FOOD. SAT DOWN TO NIBBLE. LOOKED UP. SAW MARTA THERE.

HAS SHE...?

SHE JUST *STARES* AT ME.

GROWLS IF I TRY TO GET TOO CLOSE. *GROWLS* IF I TRY TO LEAVE. *GROWLS* IF I SPEAK TO HER.

MAYBE I CAN...

HSSSSS

MAYBE *NOT.* MAYBE WE SHOULD JUST...

SIT.

SIT?

SIT.

SIP

SCRAPE

SLOSH

THERE. MY SWORDS ARE ON THE TABLE, MARTA.

THNKK

NOW, IF YOU DON'T MIND, WE...

STAY AWAY.

I CANNOT STAND THIS SILENCE!

SOMEONE SAY SOMETHIN'!

SHE RADIATES POWER!

CAN YOU FEEL IT?

DAMMIT, SOMEBODY TALK!

GERALT, TELL ME A STORY OF LOVE. I NEED TO HEAR OF TRUE LOVE.

AND SPARE ME YOUR STORIES OF LOVE BOUGHT WITH COIN. TELL ME...TELL ME A STORY OF A GIRL YOU'VE LOVED. OR ONE THAT LOVED YOU.

LOVE? ALL I HAVE IS ROACH.

ROACH?

MY HORSE. IT'S WHAT I NAME EVERY HORSE I HAVE.

AND WHY IS THAT?

IT'S PRIVATE.

BUT FINE. WANT A WITCHER'S LOVE STORY? LEMME JUST WET MY THROAT WITH WINE, DROWN MY COMMON SENSE IN THE PROCESS, AND I'LL GIVE IT A SHOT.

"MET A WOMAN IN A TAVERN, ONCE.

"THE RADIANT ROOSTER, IN TRETOGOR.

"SHE HAD SOME INTERESTING THINGS TO SAY ABOUT MY ***SCARS.*** I SAID SOME NICE THINGS ABOUT HER SHAPELY... WE TALKED ABOUT ***HORSES.*** THE ***STARS. MONSTERS.*** WE TALKED ABOUT A LOT OF THINGS, FOR HOURS.

"THEN WE WENT UPSTAIRS.

"WE NEGOTIATED A PRICE OF ***TWO SILVER ORENS,*** AND WE STOPPED TALKING FOR A WHILE."

I THOUGHT I SAID ***NO*** STORIES ABOUT ***PAYING*** FOR ***WOMEN.***

AHH, YES. ABOUT ***THAT...***

"WOKE UP IN THE MORNING, AND SHE WAS **GONE**, BUT THE **ORENS** WERE STILL THERE. TWO PIECES OF SILVER."

HERE THEY ARE.

CLINK CLINK

YOU'VE CARRIED THE COINS EVER SINCE?

I HAVE.

HMMPF. THAT'S **LOVE**, THEN.

AND YOU SURE PUT TO REST THE FABLES OF **WITCHERS** BEING **EMOTIONLESS CREATURES.**

PERHAPS.

SHE'S GONE!

HUH?

MARTA'S GONE!

COINS DISTRACTED ME! SHE'S VANISHED!

I NEED TO FIND HER.

REALLY? YOU SEEMED DAMNED ANXIOUS WHEN SHE WAS HERE, SO WHY SEEK HER OUT?

A MAN DOES AS HE MUST, GERALT, WHETHER HE LIKES IT OR NOT.

HMM. FIRST SENSIBLE THING I'VE HEARD SINCE WE GOT HERE.

SHALL WE GO, TOO?

GO WHERE?

ANYWHERE. THE HOUSE MAKES ME RESTLESS.

THOSE SILVER COINS, ARE THEY REALLY THE SAME ONES?

COULD BE. WHO KNOWS?

SPENT THOSE COINS THAT VERY MORNING. BUT THEY COULD'VE MADE IT BACK TO MY PURSE. THESE COULD BE THEM.

YOU THINK IT LIKELY? OUT OF ALL THE SILVER COINS IN THE WORLD?

NO, I DON'T THINK IT LIKELY, BUT DESTINY ISN'T ABOUT ODDS.

DESTINY? YOU THINK THE WOMAN WAS YOUR DESTINY, OR THE COINS?

I THINK DEATH IS MY DESTINY, NOT A WOMAN.

THE WAY YOU TALK...VERY LITTLE ROMANCE IN IT, YOU KNOW.

YEAH, I KNOW.

THIS FOG SEEM NORMAL TO YOU?

NO. I'VE NEVER SEEN IT BEFORE.

ARE THERE OPEN WINDOWS? I WONDER WHAT...

HEE HEE. ALL OVER THE HOUSE. HEE HEE.

STAY BACK. BE QUIET.

THE GRAVE HAG.

WHY IS SHE IN THE HOUSE? CAN SHE DO THAT? THAT'S CHEATING.

ROASTED. CHEWY. LEATHER. SEASHELLS. TASTY TREATS.

MARBLE AND WOOD. WOLVES AND CROWS.

THAT VOICE? WHO WAS...?

TH-KRAK

HEE HEE. THE TREE *FALLS.*

PRETTY TREE.

COME. WALK *HOME WITH ME,* FETID THINGS. WE'LL FIND *SOIL* AND *STONE.*

HEE HEE. I SHALL GIVE YOU *FIRE* AND *TEETH.*

LET US WALK IN THE WOODS.

CURSED.

CURSED.

HAG.

OH, IS THERE SOMETHING IN THE *FOG?* HEE HEE.

HAG, WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH THE DEAD?

OOOO? GLOWY EYES? HANDSOME MAN. HEE HEE.

HAS HE COME TO KISS MY LIPS?

ANSWER MY QUESTION.

HEE HEE. WE WALK TO THE GRAVEYARD, WITCHER.

WE'RE ALL TO BE FRIENDS, FRIENDS, MY FRIENDS, DELICIOUS TASTY FRIENDS.

CURSED.

CURSED.

CURSED.

YOU CAN'T TAKE...

HSSSSS!

CURSED.

DAMMIT!

GERALT, NO! I'LL NOT HAVE YOU DIE THIS WAY.

RISKING YOUR LIFE FOR THE DEAD? WHAT'S THE POINT?

NO ONE'S PAYING YOU TO KILL HER. LET HER GO.

HEE HEE. LET HER GO. CHOMP AND BITE. STONE AND BONE.

CURSED.

LET HER GO. LET HER GO. OH WHERE WILL SHE GO?

HEE HEE.

TASTY, TASTY.

TWO HOURS LATER...

THIS IS BLISS. I NEEDED A GOOD BATH.

THANKS FOR SHOWING ME THIS ROOM.

IT WAS, AND YET WILL BE, MY PLEASURE. MAKE ROOM.

SAID YOU WEREN'T EVEN GOING TO LOOK. YOU LIED.

IT WAS NO LIE IF YOU KNEW I WAS LYING, AND YOU KNEW.

NOW, GERALT OF RIVIA, WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO DO NEXT?

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF MARTA?

AGGH. MUST YOU TALK OF OTHER WOMEN?

SPLASH

FINE, LET'S GET IT OUT OF THE WAY. FIRST, BRUXAE DON'T TURN PEOPLE INTO BRUXAE. IT'S SIMPLY NOT HOW IT HAPPENS. SO JAKOB IS EITHER MISTAKEN OR LYING ABOUT MARTA.

YOU KNOW THIS, RIGHT?

I'M AWARE OF IT, YES.

SO WHAT DO YOU THINK SHE IS?

SOMETHING DEAD, POSSIBLY. SOMETHING CURSED, FOR SURE.

HOW DO YOU THINK SHE *DIED?* WHAT *HAPPENED* TO HER?

I THINK...

I THINK SHE WAS *STAINED.*

HMMM. WE'VE TALKED ENOUGH, GERALT OF RIVIA.

ONE HOUR LATER...

DAMN, WOMAN... I ENJOYED THAT, BUT I'M AS DRAINED AS A BABY RAT THAT'S BEEN--

NEIIGHHHHHHHH

A HORSE?

ROACH!

JAKOB!

LEAVE ME BE! I'M NOT STEALING YOUR HORSE! JUST... LEAVING.

I MUST LEAVE!

HEE HEE. LEAVING. BOOTS ON TOMBSTONES. DISTURBS THE DUST.

HEE HEE.

YOU'RE LEAVING? BUT... MARTA?

MARTA? I CAN'T TAKE THIS NO MORE!

LOOK AT HER!

SHE JUST STARES AT ME! JUST STARES! WON'T SPEAK TO ME! NOT A WORD!

BUT SHE POURED YOU WINE AND SMILED AND... AND...SHE TALKED AND...

WHY DID SHE SMILE AT YOU? WHY?

HEE HEE. AX HAS TEETH. BITES AND BITES. PULLED INTO THE SEA. HEE HEE.

DAMMIT!

CHOK

BACK INSIDE, JAKOB. IT'S DANGEROUS OUT HERE WITH THE HAG.

LOSING IT. I'M LOSING IT. THIS HOUSE... DON'T TAKE ME BACK INTO THE HOUSE...

HEE HEE HEE.

HAG'S GETTING ON MY NERVES.

GODS, I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN. WE SHOULD EITHER KILL HER OR BUY HER A DRESS.

FEEL ANY BETTER?

JUST A TEMPER TANTRUM, WITCHER. LIKE A CHILD'S, IT'S PASSED.

DID I LEAVE MY AX OUTSIDE?

AFRAID SO. LET'S WAIT TILL THE LAUGHING HAG'S WADDLED OFF AND..HMMM?

SONG-BIRDS ARE BACK.

AND... THAT DOOR. YOU REMEMBER THAT DOOR?

NO. WE SHOULD MOVE ON. HURRY, LET'S FIND ONE OF THOSE BANQUET HALLS AND...

STRANGE. BEEN DOWN THIS HALLWAY MANY TIMES, BUT I DON'T REMEMBER THIS DOOR.

LOCKED.

THAT'S *THAT*, THEN, GERALT. LET'S *GO.*

I DON'T LIKE THAT DOOR.

TOO SOLID TO BREAK DOWN. MIGHT HAVE TO GET YOUR *AX AFTER ALL.*

NO. LEAVE IT *OUTSIDE.*

LET'S GO. FIND US SOME *WINE.*

LET'S GET *DRUNK.*

OH... VARA'S KEY?

CLICK

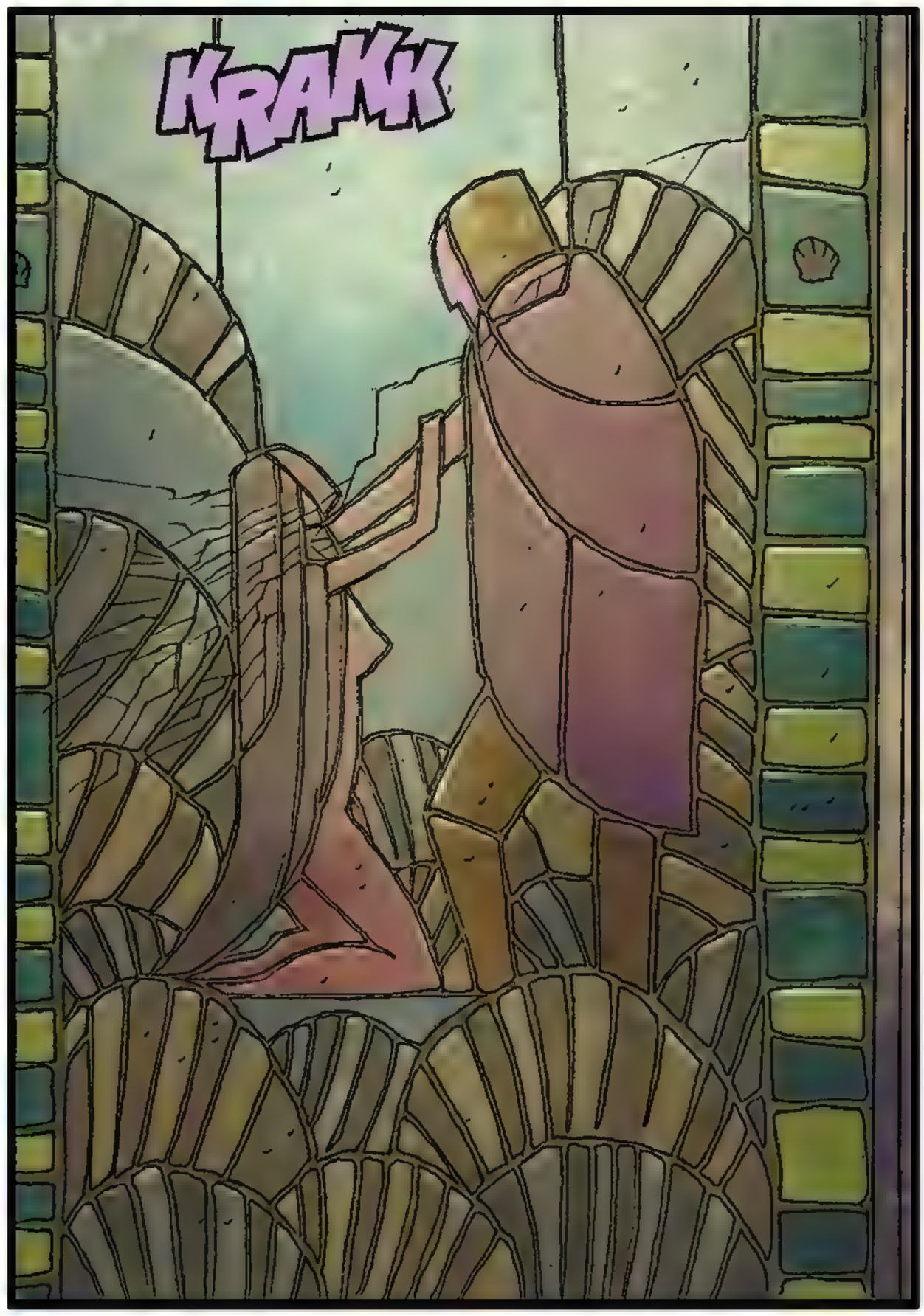
HMMM. THE RUMORED FOURTH STORY.

WELL, WE ALL LIKE *STORIES*, DON'T WE?

CHAPTER FIVE






KRAKK


KRAK


HELLO AGAIN, WITCHER.

YOU CAN PUT YOUR SWORD AWAY.

I *COULD*, BUT I'VE LEARNED IT'S BETTER TO MAKE A MISTAKE WITH A SWORD IN MY *HAND* RATHER THAN IN MY *SCABBARD*.

FAIR ENOUGH. I SUPPOSE THE LIFE OF A *WITCHER* RARELY REWARDS TRUSTING THOSE LIKE ME.

MHM. VERY RARELY.

SO WHAT *ARE* YOU? YOU'RE NO *BRUXA*.

OF *COURSE* NOT. I WISH JAKOB WOULD TELL BETTER *LIES*.

AS TO WHAT I *AM*, I'M LIKE *ALL THE OTHERS* IN THIS HOUSE.

CURSED?

YES. *CAUGHT* BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH.

HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW?

MY *MEDALLION*-- IT REACTS TO THIS HOUSE, ITS *CURSES.*

ALSO WHENEVER *JAKOB'S* NEAR-- FROM THE START, WHEN WE WERE AT THE LAKE.

"*DROWNER* NEARLY SURPRISED ME THEN. ITS PRESENCE MASKED BY JAKOB'S CURSE.

"AND THEN, HIS STORY OF YOU BECOMING A BRUXA. BRUXAE DON'T MAKE BRUXAE. AT LEAST NOT BY KILLING HUMANS. JAKOB SHOULD'VE KNOWN A WITCHER COULD NEVER BELIEVE IT."

FINALLY, THIS *HOUSE*, THE *MESSAGES* IN THE GLASS. THE *SONGBIRDS*, YOU SPOKE TO ME THROUGH THEM.

TRIED TO *TELL* ME SOMETHING.

DID JAKOB *MURDER* YOU?

"MY FATHER **SOLD** ME INTO MARRIAGE. JAKOB AND I BECAME HUSBAND AND WIFE FOR **TWENTY-ONE** SILVER COINS AND **SEVEN** FOX SKINS.

"I HAD NO **LOVE** TO GIVE HIM. **NONE.** HE WOULD **FORCE HIMSELF** ON ME NIGHTLY, **BEAT** ME, AND CALL IT **LOVE.**

"I WOULD GO DOWN TO THE SEASHORE AND COLLECT **SHELLS**-- MY ONLY TIMES OF **PEACE.** EACH OF MY SHELLS TOLD THE STORY OF ANOTHER **WORLD.** OF **LIFE** ELSEWHERE. **PRETTY** SHELLS. PRETTY **LIVES.**

"JAKOB INVENTED HIS **OWN** STORIES ABOUT OUR LIFE TOGETHER. HE THOUGHT IT A **PRETTY** LIFE. A **HAPPY** HOME. FAR LESS TRUTH TO **HIS** STORIES THAN **MINE.**

"THEN ONE DAY, JAKOB DECIDED HE WANTED A NEW DAGGER, ITS HILT WITH AN INLAY. HE SENT ME TO THE BLACKSMITH AFTER CRUSHING A FEW OF MY FAVORITE SHELLS...

"AND SO...I MET THE *BLACKSMITH.*

"HIS NAME WAS *TALTON.* WE FELL FOR ONE ANOTHER AT ONCE.

"AT LAST I HAD MY TRUE STORY OF LOVE.

"THREE WEEKS IT LASTED. I WOULD VISIT TALTON FREQUENTLY, DUTIFULLY CHECKING ON THE DAGGER'S PROGRESS.

"JAKOB BECAME *SUSPICIOUS.* HE CAUGHT TALTON AND ME *TOGETHER* ON THE BEACH.

"IT WENT *BADLY* FOR US. *HORRIBLY,* EVEN."

HAS JAKOB TOLD YOU HIS STORY OF THE *SEA MONSTER* THAT NEARLY STOLE ME AWAY?

HE *HAS.*

YES, WELL... HE CAME TO *BELIEVE* IT, I THINK.

"HE CAME TO SEE TALTON'S HANDS AS *TENTACLES* THAT HAD EMERGED FROM THE SEA. THE *LOVER'S MARKS* TALTON LEFT BEHIND, MY *SOFT WONDERFUL BRUISES,* WERE INJURIES I'D SUSTAINED FROM A BEAST, *STAINS* JAKOB COULD NEVER STOP SEEING ON MY FLESH.

"HE BEGAN TO SEE ME AS A *VAMPIRE...* ONE WHO DRAINED HIM OF *MANHOOD,* STOLE HIS *MASCULINITY.* HE BEGAN TO THINK ME A *BRUXA.*

"WHEN HE **KILLED** ME, I CURSED HIS **NAME**, HIS **LIFE**, HIS **EXISTENCE**. I CURSED EVERY **KISS** HE'D EVER FORCED ON ME, EVERY **HAIR** ON HIS HEAD, EVERY-THING HE'D EVER DONE. I **CURSED** HIM."

THERE WAS A PERIOD OF BLACKNESS, THEN I FOUND MYSELF AT THIS **HOUSE**. I FOUND MYSELF AMIDST THE **CURSED ONE OF THEM.**

I FOUND MYSELF DEAD, AND THEN IN TIME-- TO SOME EXTENT-- THE VERY BRUXA JAKOB BELIEVED ME TO BE.

EVER SINCE, I'VE BEEN SLOWLY **DRAWING** HIM HERE, WHERE HE **BELONGS.**

I'VE NO TRUE IDEA **WHAT** THIS HOUSE IS, BUT I KNOW THE **CURSED** DWELL HERE, AND MY **HUSBAND** BELONGS AMONG THEM.

I'VE FOUND **SOME** SOLACE IN MY CURRENT EXISTENCE, GERALT. I'VE FOUND **PEACE.**

AND **RICHES... TREASURES** CARRIED HERE BY **OTHER** CURSED SOULS.

HERE.

WHAT'S THIS FOR?

TO **DO** WHAT WITCHERS **DO.** I WANT YOU TO **KILL** JAKOB. AFTER ALL, YOU KILL **MONSTERS,** DON'T YOU?

FOR COIN? NO. NOT THIS KIND OF MONSTER. WITCHERS DON'T HUNT HUMANS FOR COIN.

JUST NOT OUR WAY.

PLEASE. PLEASE... I...

I COULD TALK TO HIM. MAYBE HE--

NO! YOU MUST KILL HIM! PLEASE! I CAN'T DO IT.

I MAY LOOK LIKE A BRUXA, BUT I'M NOTHING. ONLY THE CURSED SHADOW OF A DEAD GIRL.

I'LL...I'LL TELL THE LESHEN TO LET YOU LEAVE THE FOREST. YOU WON'T BE TRAPPED HERE ANYMORE. HE'LL DO AS I ASK. I'M SURE OF IT.

KILL JAKOB FOR ME, AND THE LESHEN WILL LET YOU PASS.

NO. WON'T LET YOU BARTER WITH HIS KIND. BESIDES, I'M A WITCHER...

I'LL MAKE MY OWN WAY THROUGH THE WOODS.

FOUND HER, DID YOU?

THOUGHT YOU SAID THAT KEY WAS TO *YOUR* ROOM.

I LIED. I'M A *LIAR.* HOW *ELSE* WOULD I END UP IN A HOUSE FOR THE *CURSED?*

DOUBT I WANNA KNOW. WHERE'S *JAKOB?*

I'M NOT SURE. LIKELY TRYING TO RUN OFF.

HE *KNOWS* YOU WENT UP TO THAT ROOM.

HMMM.

JAKOB! WHERE *ARE* YOU?

JAKOB!

THERE YOU ARE. STAY THERE. SOMETHING WE OUGHTA--

NO!

NO! STAY AWAY!

THUMP

CALM DOWN, I JUST WANNA TALK!

THEN WHY'VE YOU GOT YOUR SWORD OUT?

HE HAS A POINT.

HUNFF!

STOP IT, YOU FOOL!

NO! YOU'LL KILL ME! YOU'VE BEEN TO MARTA'S ROOM!

DID YOU SLEEP WITH THE WHORE, GERALT?

CLANG

DID YOU STAIN HER? SHE WAS PERFECT! YOU MARKED HER! BRUISED HER!

SHE WAS MINE!

MORE LIES, HUNTER. I DIDN'T TOUCH YOUR WIFE.

AND SHE WAS NEVER YOURS.

SHE WAS MINE! AND SHE ALWAYS WILL BE! SHE'LL BE MINE AFTER YOU'RE DEAD!

THINK ME EASY GAME, WITCHER? YOU THINK ME A CHILD IN THIS FIGHT? PAHH! I'VE KILLED A SCORE OF MEN, EVEN MORE!

"ALL THOSE *MEN* WHO CAME NEAR MY BRUXA, ALL THOSE MEN *FEIGNING* TO BE MERCHANTS ON THE ROAD.

"OR *TRAVELERS* FROM ONE CITY TO THE *NEXT.*

"OR PRETENDING TO BE *HUNTERS* JUST AS A *MONSTER* WILL PRETEND TO BE A *BLACKSMITH.*

"I'VE HUNTED *THEM* AS MUCH AS I'VE HUNTED *DEER.*

"AND THEY'VE NEVER COME CLOSE TO MY MARTA."

REMEMBER WHERE WE ARE, WITCHER? THE CURSED COME TO REST HERE, SUCH REST AS IS GIVEN THEM.

I RECKON THEY'VE GROWN RESTLESS.

CURSED.

CURSED.

HAH HAH HAH!

CURSED.

AARD!

WUMPFF

CURSED.

CURSED.

CURSED.

CURSED.
CURSED.
IGNI.
CURSED.
CURSED.
CURSED.
CURSED.
YOU FIGHT SILENT, GERALT.
ALL WITCHERS DO.
LEAVE THE GRUNTING AND HOWLING TO OUR FOES.

AYE. THESE LIKE TO MOAN.

I JUST *HOPE* YOU'RE NOT AS FAST ON YOUR *FEET* AS YOU ARE WITH YOUR *SWORD.*

CURSED.

GAHH!

SMAKKT

UNFFF!

ARGH.

SHIT.

DON'T... DON'T *KILL* ME.

WASN'T *GOING* TO. MARTA ASKED ME TO, BUT...I TURNED HER DOWN.

HEE HEE.

CURSES IN THE TREES. TASTY TASTY.

TMMPT

SEE, I SENSED SOMETHING STRANGE FROM THE *START*, BUT...I NEEDED TO PRETEND THERE WAS STILL ROOM FOR DOUBT.

ENJOYED TALKING TO YOU. ENJOYED MEETING SOMEONE WHO DIDN'T *RUN* WHEN THEY SAW MY EYES.

BEING A *WITCHER'S* LIKE A *CURSE*. WELL, *ALMOST*.

BY NATURE, WE HAVE VERY FEW *FRIENDS*.

FRIENDS WE *NEVER* TAKE LIGHTLY.

BUT *SOMETIMES*, *EVEN WITH* FRIENDSHIP... *ENOUGH* IS *ENOUGH*.

AND YOU JUST HAVE TO *WALK AWAY*.

THAT'S *IT?* YOU...YOU'RE JUST GOING TO *LEAVE?*

HAH!

LOST HIS *NERVE.*

COWARD.

IT'S BECAUSE HE *KNOWS YOU'RE MINE!*

YOU *BELONG* TO ME!

YOU...

EHH?

HEE HEE.

NO!

NO.

JAKOB, MY HUSBAND, YOUR BONES WILL BE WIND CHIMES.

"YOUR SKIN WILL BE TURNED INTO BREECHES. YOUR TEETH WILL BE A NECKLACE."

AND YOUR MEMORY WILL BE NAUGHT BUT THE WIND.

YOU'RE *LEAVING*, THEN?

GOT A SPARE HORSE NOW. COME *WITH* ME. WE CAN RIDE SIDE BY SIDE UNTIL WE GROW TIRED OF EACH OTHER.

I THINK YOU KNOW BETTER THAN *THAT*.

NOT SURE I DO.

HMPFF. PROBABLY NOTHING YOU CAN *DO* ABOUT IT, THOUGH I'D HOPED YOU WOULDN'T GIVE UP SO *EASILY*.

WELL...WATCH OUT FOR THE *LESHEN,* THEN. AND THAT *HAG.*

I WILL.

YOU KNEW THIS HOUSE WAS FOR THE *DAMNED* FROM THE *START,* DIDN'T YOU?

OF COURSE YOU DID. YOU'RE A *WITCHER.* YOU...YOUR KIND *BELONGS* IN THIS PLACE, GERALT OF RIVIA.

NO. JAKOB TOLD ME THAT TO STAY IN ONE PLACE, SETTLE DOWN--IT'D KILL *EITHER* OF US. HAD IT RIGHT, I THINK. HE CAME HOME TO THIS HOUSE--FOUND HIS MARTA, HIS TRUTH, HIS END.

BUT I'M NOT *READY* TO DIE YET. DARESAY YOU AREN'T EITHER-- NO TRUTH OF YOURS HERE.

THING'S MADE OF *GLASS,* VARA. OUGHTA BE EASY ENOUGH TO *KICK A WALL DOWN.* THINK ABOUT IT...

THE END

DUNCAN FEGREDO

STAN SAKAI



THE WITCHER®

HOUSE OF GLASS

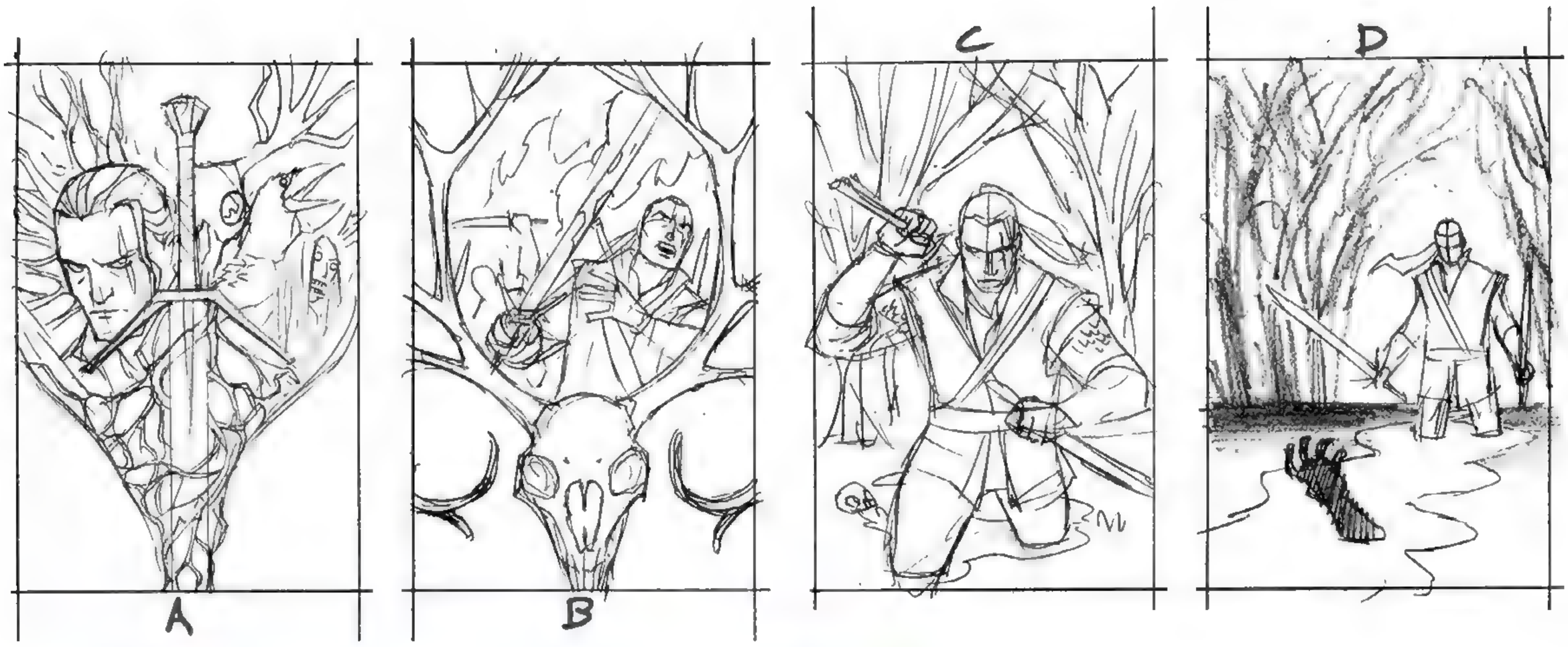
SKETCHBOOK

Notes by

DANIEL CHABON

These were the very first sketches that we got from Joe when we were on the hunt for a Witcher *artist. I knew that CD Projekt RED were big Mike Mignola fans, and I had worked with Joe previously on a* Lobster Johnson *story, so I thought Joe's style would be perfect for Geralt's world.*

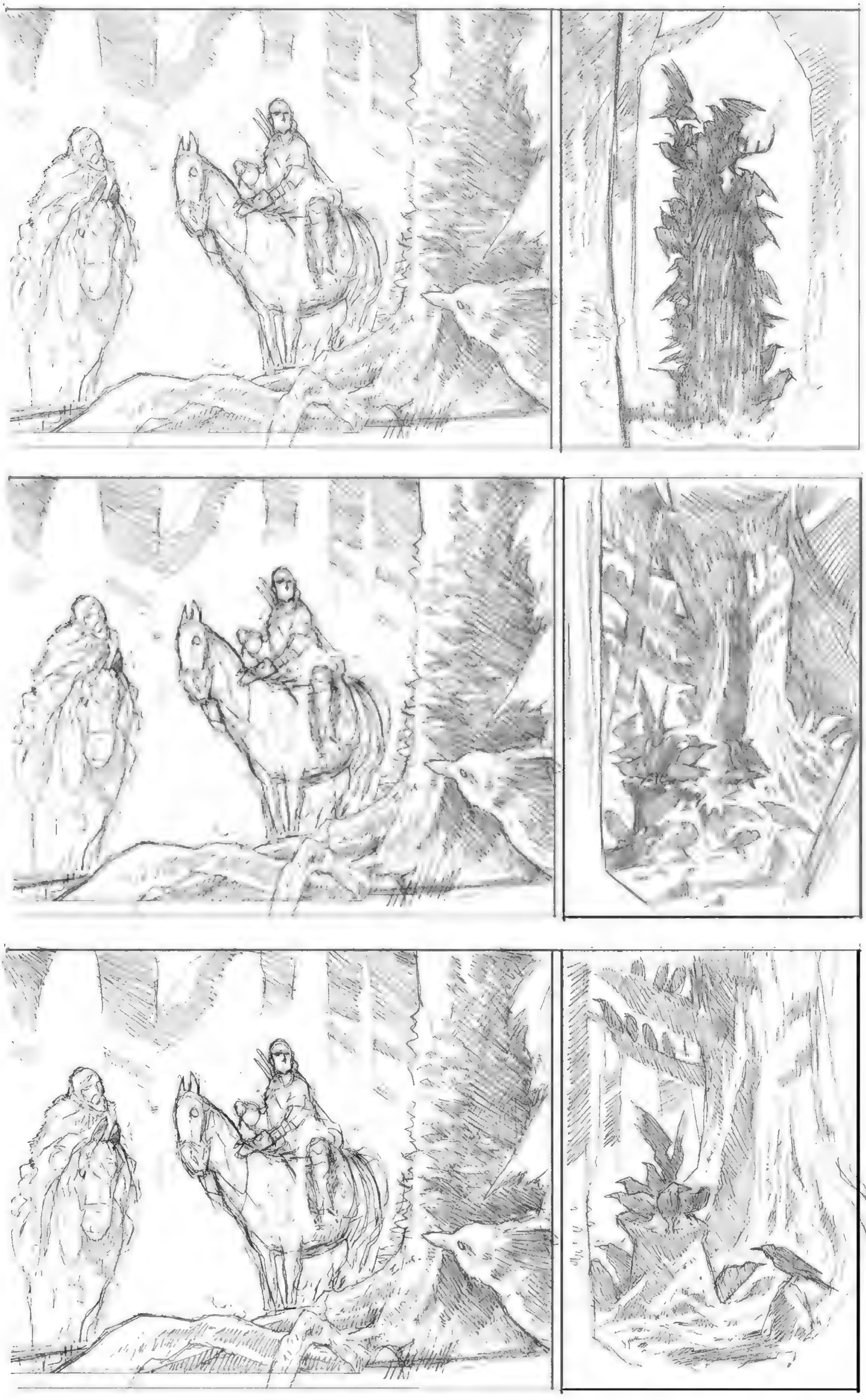








These were the first designs that we got from Dan Panosian and Dave Johnson, who collaborated on the first issue's cover.



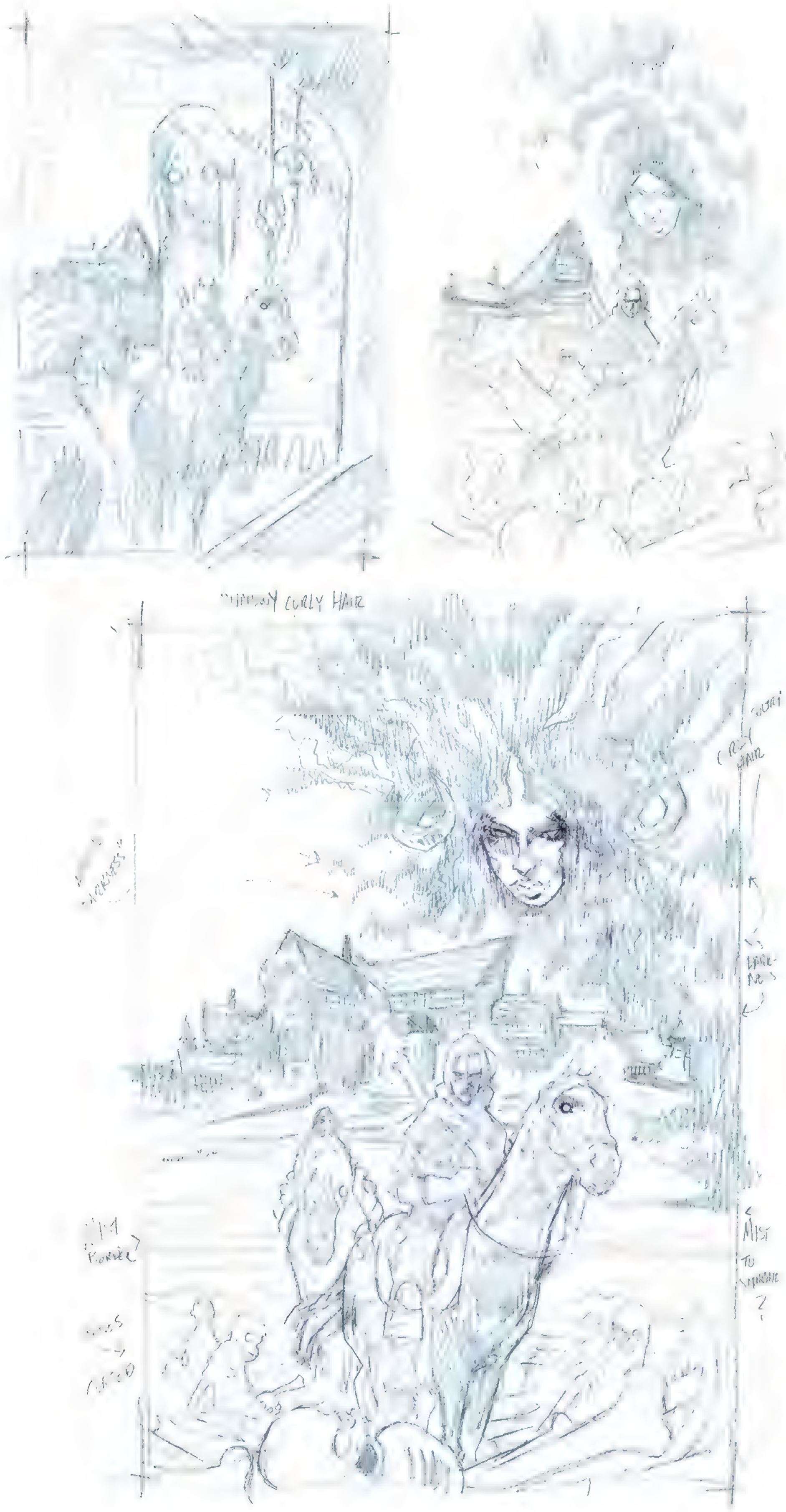
We went through a few different takes in some issue #1 panels. Here's an example from page 24.



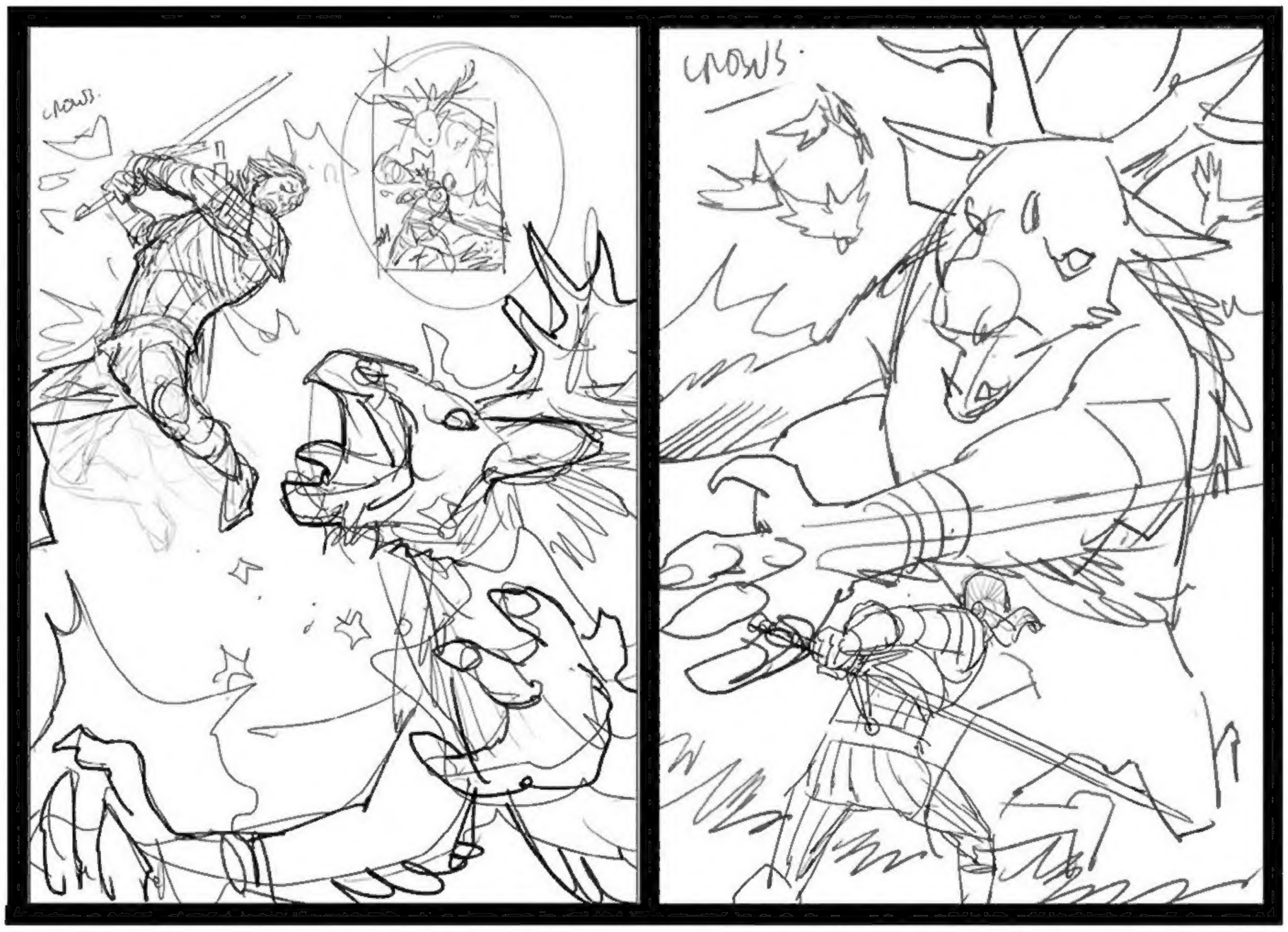




Two more examples from pages 25 and 27.



Here are Joe's issue #2 cover stages.







We hired several folks to do lithos for The Witcher. *Here are several design stages by Duncan Fegredo, and on the following page by Stan Sakai.*











WITCHER

STAN SAKAI ©



GRAPHIC NOVEL/ACTION ADVENTURE

THE WITCHER®

HOUSE OF GLASS

Traveling through the haunted Black Forest, Geralt—the famed monster hunter—encounters a widowed fisherman whose wife's vengeful corpse inhabits an eerie mansion known as the House of Glass. As Geralt explores the ghostly manor, he battles a host of terrifying creatures and unfolds a horrific mystery—which could make this house Geralt's tomb!

Written by Eisner Award winner Paul Tobin and illustrated by rising comics star Joe Querio, this action-packed horror fantasy set in the world of the blockbuster video game series *The Witcher* is sure to astonish die-hard fans and new readers alike!

"Joe Querio's art style is perfectly suited to that subtle, creeping approach to horror. He brings a powerful sense of mood to the page, forcing the eye to linger on each panel and soak in the unsettling nature of the forest and its sights." —IGN

"Even if you're not a fan of The Witcher *media already, I think there's a lot in this book to enjoy, but if you are, this is a must-buy."*—COMIC VINE



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